

**“TREASURE: Giving Back to God”
(Stewardship Sermon Series #2)**

Deuteronomy 15:7-11 & Matthew 6:1-6
Rev. James Ramsey ~ November 16, 2014



Our theme is “treasure” these few weeks before Thanksgiving...
~ Are we investing our time, energy, and money in the things that really matter to God?
~ Or are we storing up treasure for other things?
~ Is our treasure stored where moth and rust consume...or where thieves can break in and steal?

“Where your treasure is, there your heart will be also,” Jesus said.

Jesus invites us to lay up treasure in heaven.

Sometimes you get the chance to be part of something bigger than yourself. Your name may not be mentioned, and you may not hoist the trophy in front of adoring fans; but as the confetti falls, you will feel a part of it. It won't



matter that you're not getting the glory; the glory is in knowing that you were a part of it.



I believe this explains the draw of *Steeler Nation*. Many of us say we have black and gold blood in our veins. When we watch a football game – it's not

just a game. We're part of it. When the team wins...we win. We delight in this identity. Some take it with them wherever they go! I believe that's Machu Pichu in the background!



It's good to be a fan...especially a Steeler fan. But it's even better to be a part of something where you know that you played a role, not just a fan, but a participant, a contributor, a difference-maker.



I feel that way here at East Union...and I know many of you do, too, in lots of ways. Just one example: We've raised thousands of dollars here for our Haiti clean



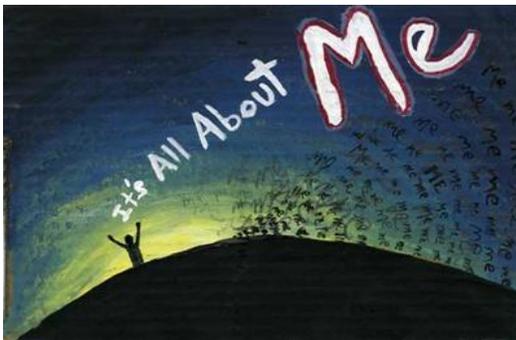
water project, a project I've seen, first-hand, making a difference in the lives of God's people.

My family's contribution to that project has been significant for us, in time and money, but it wasn't very big when compared with the total money raised, time given or the work done. Different people contributed in different

ways, no one person doing everything. In spite of that, we were all part of this God-initiative, and that is satisfying in a spiritual way. It's an amazing and humbling thing to know that our life can play a role in something bigger than us. So much of what we do here has the feeling that God is present with us, working through us. (Interfaith Hospitality Network, our Prayer Cloud, Food Bank, our buildings and grounds, our heritage on this holy hill...)



Jesus warns in his Sermon on the Mount that when you are trying to do good, be careful, make sure that you don't make a performance of it. Your actions might be a good show, but God won't be cheering. When you do things for someone else, don't call attention to yourself.



Jesus gives such a warning because he cares about our hearts. He knows that if we seek credit for the good we do—if our actions become a performance—then our hearts will suffer.

If we start thinking it's all about us, then we miss out on God's amazing benefits of being and doing good. Yes, we will get our credit, but that pales in comparison to what we receive when we give humbly before God. Jesus says there is a reward in giving away what is valuable to us.

**Giving
back
to God**

Do you think that is right?

When we join in on the things of God, we don't get the credit—God does—but there is something about joining in with God that is so much better than having our name in lights. Being part of God's work is a unique reward.

There's a song playing all the time on Christian radio these days – it's titled "He Knows My Name" by Francesca Battistelli.

Listen to the words of the chorus:

I don't need my name in lights
I'm famous in my Father's eyes
Make no mistake
He knows my name
I'm not living for applause
I'm already so adored
It's all His stage
He knows my name oh, oh,
He knows my name oh, oh



He calls me chosen, free forgiven, wanted, child of the King,
His forever, held in treasure...
I am loved

God knows us, loves us and wants our hearts to blossom.



Giving is good for our hearts--- Jesus links giving to the poor and spending time with God. If we truly want to be generous givers and experience God's abundant life, we have to be people of prayer. We cannot give in extravagant and sacrificial ways if we are not abiding with God.

We need secret places where God can speak to our hearts. No one gives in amazing ways just because there is a great need; extravagant, sacrificial givers do so because their hearts have been changed by spending quality time with God, quiet time, concentrated time, holy time.





To experience life more fully, we respond to all that God has done for us by giving back to God, seeking to participate in what God is doing in our world, through our church, in our lives. We can invest our time, money, and energy in the things of God, things that are so much bigger than what one or two of us can do on our own. We get to be on God's team. We stand in the confetti, finding joy and meaning, knowing that we played a part. God is calling us to sacrificial giving.

(video) Imagine walking through a forest. Consider these words as we walk...

"Invest time, money, energy in things bigger than you."

"Don't seek credit. Seek good."

"Change your heart. Spend time with God."

As we think from our perspective...how we might give back to God, let us not forget wherein lies heaven's treasure?

Yesterday to end our Strategic Planning/Session retreat, our consultant, Rev. Doug Portz, reminded us how God values East Union Church, our people and our ministry together. He read a text from 1 Peter,

But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's own people,
(1 Peter 2:9)

Where is heaven's treasure?...
right here on earth...in us.

We are God's treasure!

